

Cromwell Barney House
91 Williams Street
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-252

HABS
RI,
4-PROV,
149-

PHOTOGRAPH
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-252

CROMWELL BARNEY HOUSE

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Address: 91 Williams Street, Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island. Plat 16, Lot 234. 34 Williams Street in 1836, 52 Williams Street in 1847, 55 Williams Street in 1871, 91 Williams Street since 1894.

Present Owner and Occupant: Dr. John O. Strom.

Present Use: Dwelling.

Brief Statement of Significance: This is an example of a medium-sized brick house of about 1800. It is one of an unusual series of houses built on Williams Street at this time on leased land with certain building restrictions stipulated in the lease.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1798 William Holroyd, attorney for Rebekah and Peleg Williams, farm lets to Cromwell Barney, blacksmith, one certain lot of land for \$25 per year in terms of 20 years from 6/1799. "The said Cromwell Barney is to erect a DWELLING HOUSE on the said lot, the outside of brick, and set back 6 1/2' S of Williams Street. Bounded N by Williams Street 50'; W by land this day leased to Samuel Carlile; S by Ashton 50'"...Deed Book 36, page 367, in Providence City Hall.
- 1801 Cromwell Barney and/or his family lived here from 1801 until 1874. Henry Barney, musician, also lived here from 1841-1874... Providence Directory.
- 1807 FIRE RECORD...To Cromwell Barney for \$2000...Brick DWELLING HOUSE on the S side of Williams Street...shingled roof. 2 stories high. 36' front and 35' front to rear...Mss. fire insurance records of the Providence Mutual Insurance Co. at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, R. I. - Volume 2, Policy #511.
- 1875 Henry E Barney gives quit claim deed to Ira N Goff all the premises and buildings, and is the same lot leased to Cromwell Barney in 1798 with the DWELLING HOUSE built and formerly occupied by Cromwell Barney...Deed Book 253, page 81, in Providence City Hall.
- 1875/6 Ira Goff lived here...Providence Directory.

- 1876 Ira N Goff to Chase Wiggin for \$955 "all the buildings and improvements and is the same lot leased by and conveyed to grantor by Henry E Barney. Bounded: N by Williams Street 50'; E by gangway and Clarke; S by Samuel G Arnold 50'"...Deed Book 257, page 459, in Providence City Hall.
- 1876 Chase Wiggin transfers the above property to Joseph H Welch... Deed Book 257, page 460, in Providence City Hall.
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- 1922 Desmond Fitzgerald et al sell to Joseph W Lewis "a certain lot of land together with all buildings and improvements"...Deed Book 618, pages 283-4, in Providence City Hall.
- 1923 Property was taxed to Russell W and Janet T S Knight and in 1949 J T S Knight gave it to Russell Knight for life...He lived here until 1961...Providence Directory.
- 1961 To present owner.

Occupants from Providence Directory

1892 Hunt, El and Mary Tynon
1894 Carlos Buslong and Fleming Vance,
the Vances were here until 1916
1917 to 1922 N A Romano and Catherine Regnan widow
1926 to 1961 Russell Knight

B. Date of erection: 1798-1801.

C. Notes on alterations and additions: The house has been extensively remodeled, especially on the interior, as noted in the description, when it was occupied by Russell Knight. Work done under the direction of Norman M. Isham and Albert Harkness, architects; drawings for the remodeling now in possession of the present owners, dated 1923.

Prepared by Antoinette F. Downing and Elvira Gowdey
for the Providence Preservation Society
and
Osmund R. Overby
Yale University
May 1963

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is a characteristic example of a medium-sized brick house of about 1800.

2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 36' (five-bay north front) x 35', two-and-a-half stories high.
2. Foundations: Stone, faced with brick.
3. Wall construction: Heavy timber frame structure, brick veneer walls.
4. Porches, stoops: Brownstone entrance stoop, three steps high.
5. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys in outside end walls. Originally a third chimney, triangular in plan, in rear wall, similar to one surviving in the Samuel Carlile house next door at 87 Williams Street, replaced by a later chimney.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways: Pedimented doorway with Ionic pilasters, semicircular fanlight, of the correct period for this house but added during the remodeling of 1923.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Double-hung windows, six-light sash, in heavy wood frames set in brick openings with flat brick arches, louvered shutters.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gambrel roof, unusual for this period but seems to be original, tile covering.
 - b. Cornice: Stepped brick cornice with alternate brick projecting in a dentil pattern.
 - c. Dormers: Gabled dormers on front and rear added later.

C. Technical Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Central-hall plan with central hall extending through front half of house only. Originally five-room plan, now remodeled with large parlor on west, dining room at the northeast, kitchen and family dining room at the southeast.
2. Stairways: Main stair in central hall, open well, open string, straight run with winders at the top turning 90 degrees, slender handrail and rectangular balusters.

3. Flooring: Later hardwood flooring.
 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
 5. Doorways and doors: Panel doors, molded mitered architraves, some crossetted doorways.
 6. Trim: Molded chair rail, window sills continuous with chair rail but stepped out, parlor windows have unusual flat aprons under the sills stepped out slightly from the walls.
 7. Lighting: Electric.
 8. Heating: Central. Fireplaces have one-story wood mantels, projecting mantel shelves, paneled friezes; parlor mantel has heavy engaged colonettes.
- D. Site: Narrow level lot, house set on the sidewalk line at the front, garden in the rear, narrow alley on the east side.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby
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